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Inception Workshop and 1st Regional Steering Committee Meeting for the GEF/SPC/UNDP Project Entitled: *“Ridge to Reef – Testing the Integration of Water, Land, Forest & Coastal Management to Preserve Ecosystem Services, Store Carbon, Improve Climate Resilience and Sustain Livelihoods in Pacific Island Countries”*

Nadi, Fiji Islands, 10th– 14th October, 2016

CAPTURE AND EXCHANGE OF LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

This document presents an overview of the benefit and processes involved in capturing lessons learned through a project life, and how these are used to generate good practice case studies. Options for lessons learned capture and exchange are presented, taking a two prong approach focusing on project management learning and project impact learning.

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1. Introduction

Throughout a project's life cycle, we learn lessons and discover opportunities for improvement. As a key part of the GEF Pacific R2R Programme design principles, documenting lessons learned helps a project team discover both strengths and weaknesses. It provides an opportunity for team members and/or partners to discuss successes during the project, unintended outcomes, and recommendations for others involved in similar future projects. It also allows the team to discuss things that might have been done differently, the root causes of problems that occurred, and ways to avoid those problems in later project stages.

Use of lessons learned is a principal component of an organizational culture committed to continuous improvement and adaptive management. Lessons learned mechanisms communicate acquired knowledge more effectively and ensure that beneficial information is factored into planning, work processes, and activities. We capture lessons so as to learn about what to do, but also, how to think about what we do.

The mechanisms or processes used to collect, share, and disseminate lessons learned may vary, but in general such a process is comprised of five main elements as shown in Figure 1.

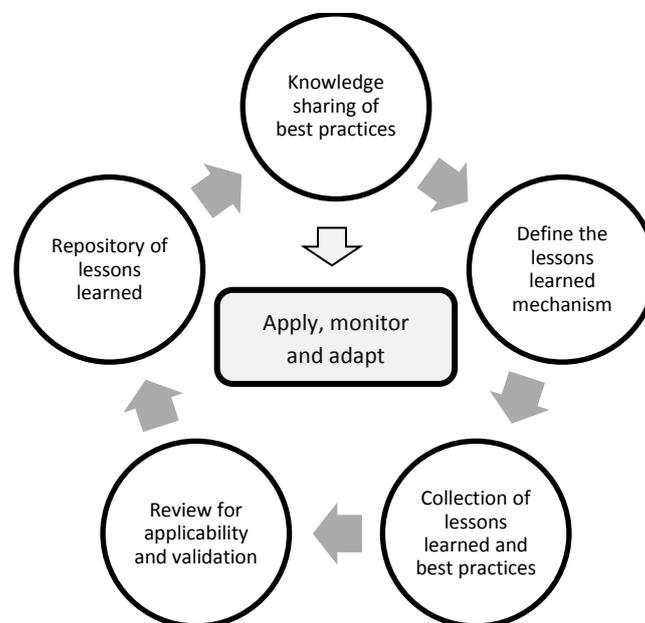


Figure 1: Generic lessons learned cycle

1.1. Purpose of the concept paper

The purpose of this lessons learned concept paper is to provide guidance and structure for the capture, creation, storage, sharing and use of lessons learned to support the GEF Ridge to Reef Programme and natural resource management in the Pacific region. Having a clear and adaptable mechanism for this process strengthens the knowledge management and communications objectives of the R2R Programme and enables timely feedback of learning generated in various stages of the programme back into design and delivery.

1.2. Scope of the concept paper

One of the core outcomes of the GEF Pacific R2R programme focuses on the establishment of national and regional platforms for managing information and sharing of best practices and lessons learned in R2R. Central to this is the creation of key knowledge tools and products for effective sharing of information and knowledge. Knowledge management and the lessons learned role within it, will play a key role in facilitating planning and policy processes to facilitate the adoption of ICM/IWRM practices supporting sustainable livelihoods and climate

resilience among Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). The programme adopts a “Community to Cabinet” approach, which aims to capture both tacit and explicit knowledge from communities to leaders in national government.

Programme Component 4. *Regional and national ‘Ridge to Reef’ indicator for reporting, monitoring , adaptive management and knowledge management* builds on the results-based approach to project planning and management. The component will also establish national and regional platforms for managing information and sharing of best practices and lessons learned in integrated land, water, forest and coastal management including climate adaptation.

This concept paper outlines an approach to creating and collecting the experiences that become good lessons and practices that this project and others like it will want to encourage as well as the not-so-good experiences we want to avoid repeating. Experiences will be sought from national project managers, government ministry officials, demonstration pilot communities and specific community groups involved in the GEF Pacific R2R Programme. Several avenues are proposed for sharing these lessons and practices.

This concept paper will be refined and updated after initial review and comments of the Regional Steering Committee. How this concept paper fits into the broader GEF Pacific R2R Programme Strategies is outlined below.

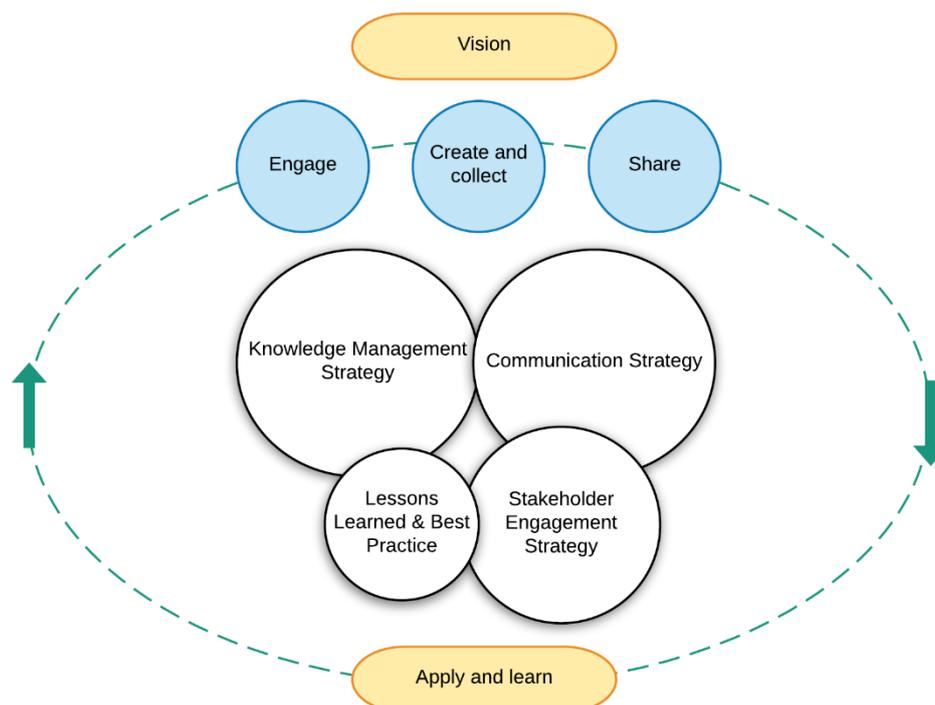


Figure 2: Knowledge and engagement strategies framework

Table 1: Links between R2R Programme strategies

Strategy	Linkages
Communications Strategy	Different stakeholder group/s require different messaging approaches and levels of communication. This strategy provides overarching messaging for R2R objectives and can provide themes for the capture and distillation of lessons learned. Lessons learned and good practice case studies will be fed through the communications channels and monitored for impact and usefulness.
Knowledge Management Strategy	This strategy provides the overarching strategy for the lessons learned process. Lessons learned and good practice case studies form part of the outputs of the knowledge management strategy and the process of knowledge capture and sharing. The sharing and impact of these is a core aspect of knowledge management.
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	Information gathered through stakeholder engagement evaluation can be material for lessons learned. Lessons learned nationally and regionally will inform stakeholder engagement procedures and methods.

2. Lessons Learned from the Pacific IWRM Project

The GEF Integrated Water resource Management (IWRM) Project had to report on its progress to the responsible GEF Implementing Agencies (UNDP and UNEP) on a quarterly basis. As part of this reporting, the Project Coordinating Unit requested that the participating countries submit quarterly reports; one component of those reports emphasised the capture of lessons learned throughout the quarter.

During the project the Lessons Learned reporting process went through several iterations. Initial forms allowed managers to describe the theme of their story and identify whether it was a success or required improvement and to detail the particulars of the story. After a revision at the 2011 Regional Steering Committee, a streamlined version was put into practice in order to generate more meaningful and significant data.

Part of this was achieved by creating categories of story themes that managers define their story by. In order to develop these categories a review was conducted of Lessons Learned to 2011 and main and sub themes identified in an extensive list. These were then grouped into the following eight categories:

1. Capacity and Performance
2. Coordination and Integration
3. Project Management
4. Stakeholder Engagement
5. Technical
6. Political
7. Socio-Cultural
8. Communications

Though the nature of stories under each heading differed broadly, these categories provided a useful tool for analysing data over time to see generally where the greatest success was and where there was need for improvement.

The most interesting story to appear out of the data was the change in lessons learned stories over time particularly when particularly when viewed in conjunction with a standard 5 year project cycle (

Figure 3). In the beginning there is a peak in Stakeholder Engagement reflecting the inception phase of the project where a lot of focus is on generating interest in the projects objectives and garnering support from various stakeholder groups. Then moving through the inception phase there are fairly even peaks in Stakeholder Engagement, Capacity/Performance and Technical. This indicates the emphasis on implementing the demonstration infrastructure aspects of the project and the capacity required to do so as well as the ongoing involvement of stakeholders.

What is interesting to note is the constant level of Project Management and Coordination/Integration over the years. In previous Lessons Learned analysis it was anticipated that Project Management issues might lessen as the projects evolved however we can see that this has not been the case and that in fact each phase of the project presents different management issues that might be viewed as learning experiences for the PMU's. The steady level of Coordination/Integration is a reflection of the importance to PMU's of collaborating with partners and the increasing or constant difficulties they face in keeping partners engaged and motivated.

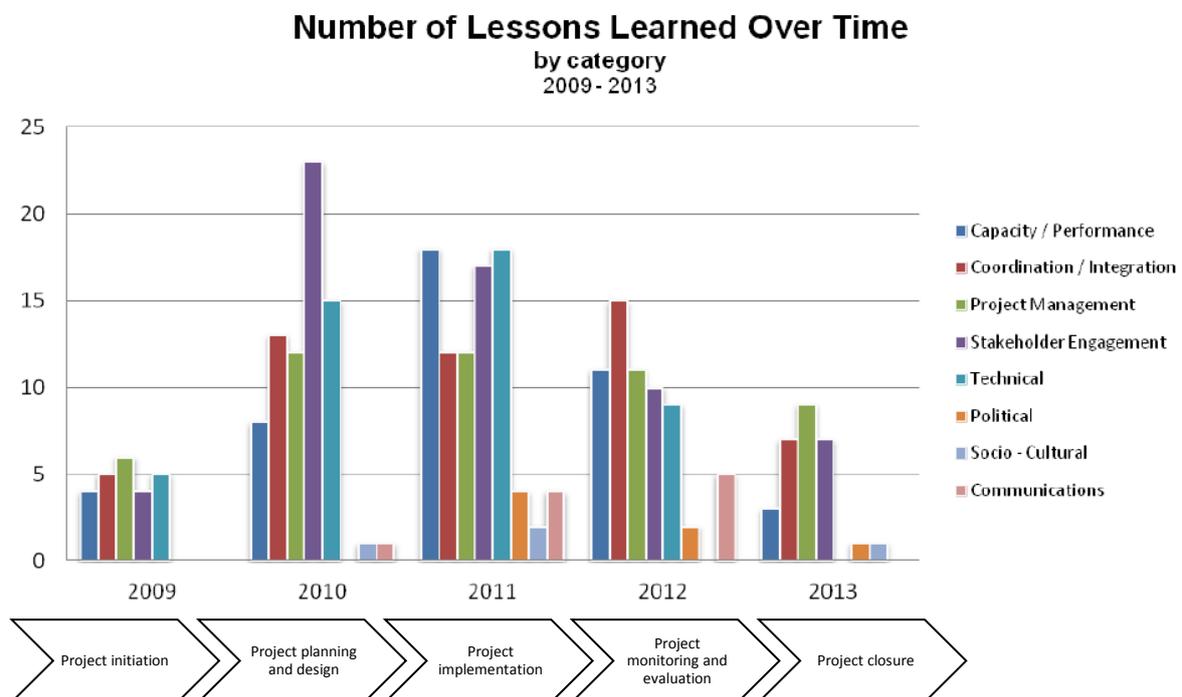


Figure 3: IWRM Lessons learned over time with generic 5 year project cycle

The number of lessons learned reports submitted during the five years changed markedly which may reflect the presence of a dedicated Knowledge Sharing Facilitator at the Regional Project Coordinating Unit.

Though the lessons learned reporting system did produce some interesting insights into what areas managers were experiencing, it did not harness a lot of quality stories on behaviour change, insights into cause and effect of manager's experience that could be used in future projects, or discovering processes or approaches that worked well and should be built on. One reason for this may be that the process of the lessons learned reporting was seen by most managers as just another reporting requirement and little thought was given to using it to its full potential. Another may be that the benefits of lessons learned and what the outcome of the whole process is, was not adequately explained or understood by managers. Whatever the reason may have been, it is clear that there needs to be an adaptive approach to the continuous capture of lessons learned through the project life cycle. Additionally, emphasis needs to be placed on correctly describing the advantage of a lessons learned or learning system to all Ridge to Reef Program staff.

3. Lessons Learned Overview

The knowledge and project management literature suggests that the full lessons learned process is rarely applied or used to its full potential. There is a risk that too many projects wait until the end of a project to conduct evaluation for lessons, by which time momentum has slowed, staff are already thinking ahead not reflecting, and much of what happened has been lost to the fog of memory. As a result, only a fraction of the lessons that could be valuable to future projects are recorded and passed on.

3.1. When to capture lessons

Projects are generally split into a number of phases or milestones and these will overlap with other projects that are approaching the same phase in their project lifecycle. Lessons learned reviews should be carried out at regular intervals along each phase, or at a minimum at the end of each formal phase of a project. Learnings can then be rapidly used within the project being reviewed or other similar projects. Thus fulfilling the lessons learned cycle to application and verification.

3.2. How to capture lessons

There are many different approaches to capturing lessons as they occur or more retrospectively. Several of these are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Some approaches to capturing lessons learned

Approach	Project phase	Method	Application
Peer Assists	Initiation, Planning and Design	This approach involves bringing together members of a new project with members of the old team. In this way new teams can present their plans, drafts etc. to the old team and seek advice or lessons they learned through their own implementation to assist the new team in developing the project.	Commercial or industrial sectors where the project components remain relatively stable.
After Action Review	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	This is a structured approach for reflecting on work or an event of a group, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. It is a form of group reflection that includes participants review of what was intended, what actually happened, why it happened and how it can be done better or built upon by the participants or project leaders.	Largely used in the military and emergency management sector where raw material is fed back into the execution of their work
Most Significant Change (MSC)	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	This is a participatory approach because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analysing the data. The process involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff.	Development and commercial
Participatory Video – Most Significant Change	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	As with MSC the areas of change and stories are written and selected by the communities. Where MSC stops at writing a story, participatory video puts a camera in the hands of the community and they script and film their story.	Development, crisis, refugee

Reflective Review	Closure	This approach explores similar questions as the AAR about what happened, but the recap of objectives and what happened will be a broader based exercise.	Development, commercial and industrial
Online database	Throughout	This approach allows the user (learner) to enter the experience, categorise, add attachments, assign actions, share with other users, rate lessons and search the database for relevant lessons and solutions	Commercial and industrial sector ruse this to monitor routine activities and improve factory or computing proceses

3.3. How and when to share lessons

It is not enough to close out the project and to create a Lessons Learned report - the reports have to be made available to others in a way that makes them want to read and apply the lessons. The key to this is effective communication:

- Organising the critical information in an easy to understand way that that makes its relevance apparent.
- Ensuring that the different stakeholder groups are aware that the information is available, and that they know where to find it.
- Presenting the information in such a way that people can quickly extract it and turn it into useful actions

The best way to ensure that good experiences are repeated and that mistakes are not, is to embed new learning into the relevant organisational processes. Where lessons do not relate to specific processes but may benefit future projects, they can be captured and worked into helpful prompts in the form of guidelines. The success of written format sharing will depend on the skill of the writing.

Much of what is learned is more intimate and conversational in nature and will always remain with the individual involved. In this instance the written format is not enough. Capturing stories through semi-structured interviews, holding face-to-face meetings, online discussion forums and email is another way of communicating lessons learned.

Contemporary means of sharing knowledge can be found in the TED style talks, knowledge summits or fairs, and through more creative medium such as poetry, music and art.

A key arena for sharing lessons learned is through communities of practice (a group or network where people are brought together by a common interest) as a lot of the context of the learning will be understood, relationships can be built which will encourage openness, and interest in avoiding repeated mistakes will be at its highest. This is discussed in more detail through the Knowledge Management Strategy.

Capturing lessons through an online shareable, searchable database allows users to add and access information at any time. This is potentially one of the most user friendly methods of sharing information if the database can be easily accessible and navigated and could promote more immediate feedback of raw material into project management.

4. Proposed Collection Process

The Pacific R2R Programme will build on the experience of the IWRM Project and take a two pronged approach to capturing and sharing lessons learned. The first is to uncover what processes in Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) deliver the best outcomes. This will be done by capturing the experiences, the wins and the mistakes, of the project managers.

The collection and particularly sharing of these experiences are valuable in building a network amongst project managers of the STAR and IW Projects whereby they can learn from each other what works well and what

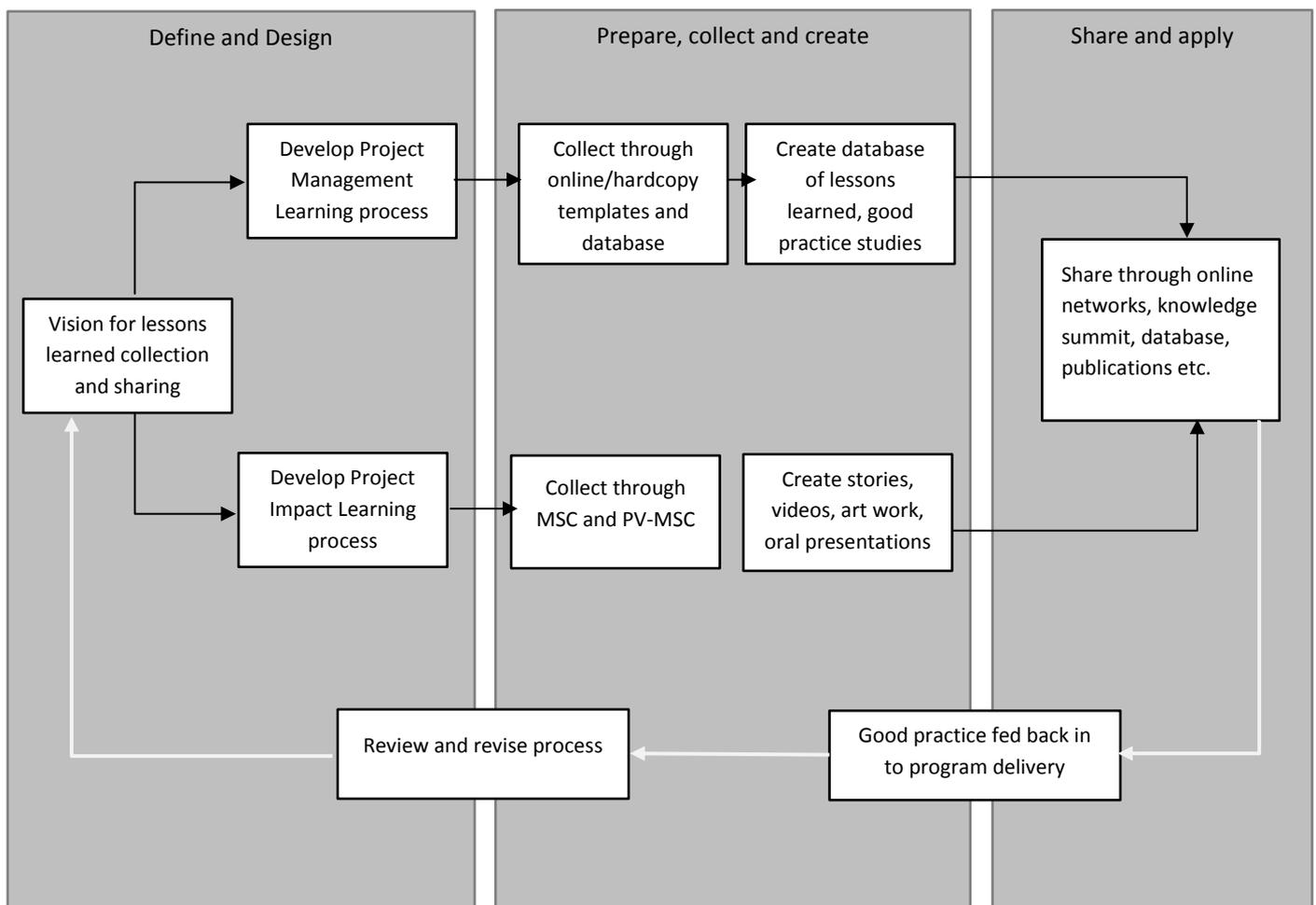
doesn't. If done well and producing good practice examples, it also leaves a legacy for environmental and natural resource managers in the future to learn from. The adoption of ideas or outcomes from these lessons learned is the true test of their value.

The second is to learn about project impacts on the target population. The collection of these experiences is slightly more challenging but is arguably the most important aspect of a project. Without them we will never know what people's expectations are, how they react to and participate in a project and ultimately what changes in their personal lives they commit to as a result of project activities and how this benefits the environment. Of interest is uncovering what motivates stakeholders to:

- change behaviours,
- engage in policy development,
- participate in monitoring and evaluation activities and;
- develop new skillsets or refine existing ones

4.1. Lessons Learned Framework

The framework below simplifies the lessons learned and capture of good practice process. It is an iterative process that will be reviewed and adjusted through the life of the programme to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the programme.



5. Project Impact Learning

Who is involved?	Pilot communities Community groups (women, youth) Steering committees IMC
What is the method?	MSC Participatory Video-MS Creative expression
What is the final product?	Community Videos MSC Stories Art, poetry, song, food...

The Regional R2R Programme Prodoc recommends using the most significant change (MSC) technique *“to gauge learning and change in perception among IMC members...building from the IWRM structured interview approach”*. (REF)

From their guide on using MSC in development projects, the developers of MSC state that *“In our experience, MSC is suited to monitoring that focuses on **learning** rather than just accountability. It is also an appropriate tool when you are interested in the effect of the intervention on people’s lives and keen to include the words of non-professionals”* – MSC Guide (Rick Davies, Rebecca Hart, 2006)

It will be useful initially to place loose boundaries around the MSC process to capture stories that are relevant to certain areas. Possible thematic areas for MSC can include:

- environmental protection and benefits
- policy development
- legislation and enforcement
- land management practices
- marine management practices
- project participation
- skills and opportunities
- monitoring
- water and sanitation
- disposal of wastes

5.1. Community Most Significant Change Process

The Most Significant Change technique could be trialled in 3-4 countries to assess its applicability both in the region and in environmental management projects. It is suggested that countries be chosen to represent each of the sub-regions and each of the island types. The Most Significant Change Guide (Hart J, and Davies R, 2005) is detailed and thorough and will be used by teams that conduct MSC.

The success of trialling the MSC process will depend on having well trained, confident facilitators at every MSC event and will also rely on a few key attributes of the national project. Some criteria for choosing a country could be existing structures for groups (functioning youth, women’s, community groups), capacity for facilitation of MSC workshops and potential to generate good overall project outcomes.

It will be important to strategically identify the people engaged in the MSC process rather than choosing people at random. They will need to be informed and recognise that this is an ongoing commitment, their continuity in the MSC process is critical to its success. The Participatory Video MSC might work best with the pilot project communities as this is ground zero of change in behaviour, and people can be actively involved in sharing the journey of change. Traditional MSC can work well with any of the groups.

A general approach to implementing the MSC and PV-MSC process is presented here.

Project phase	Action	Parties involved
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify countries to participate Identify MSC facilitators nationally or regionally Conduct MSC and PV-MSC training 	National Projects, Regional PCU, MSC consultants
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify national community groups for MSC Conduct regular MSC events Conduct regular PV-MSC events 	National Projects, community groups, Regional PCU
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine stories and videos Share through Knowledge Summit, online, publication etc 	National Projects, community groups, media providers, Regional PCU

6. Project Management Learning

Who is involved?	National Project Managers National Project Teams RPCU RSC
What is the method?	Online database Online forums Reporting requirements
What is the final product?	Online R2R Managers network with video and written documentation Good Practice case studies

It has been identified from the lessons of IWRM Project that the system used to capture, create, store and share lessons learned needs to be reviewed and adapted as the project moves through different phases and needs change. There also needs to be good incentives for managers to want to record their lessons, as well as some detailed sharing and understanding of the benefits of lessons learned to everyone.

Initially the idea of an online database will be trialled along with the paper template for reporting. Broad thematic areas will be used for managers to categorise their lessons and to allow them to refine their thinking around what has happened in their projects. In the beginning these will be left quite broad and as the project progresses and through individual relationships with managers, refined to focus managers into a particular area of learning. Some areas for consideration include:

- Capacity and Education
- Communications and Knowledge Management
- Community Participation and Stakeholder Engagement
- Gender
- Coordination and Integration
- Identifying, characterising and conserving marine/terrestrial areas
- Identifying Risks
- ICM-IWRM
- Partnerships and Linkages
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Programme Activities
- Project Cycle Management

An online lessons learned database can record both the problem and potential solution as well as important project attributes in a single easily accessible database. This makes it easier to identify recurring issues, to update the data and to maintain the accuracy and relevancy of the data. A live database also allows the user to define an 'action' for the lesson, a responsible person to follow up on the experience.

By building, maintaining and using a lessons learned database, knowledge and experience can be disseminated and used to improve project processes and prevent the repeated occurrence of similar mistakes. This will ultimately lead to more successful projects and the consequent financial advantage for relatively little effort.

Software options include: Secutor Solutions Lessons Learned Database, Lessons Management Hub, Akvo, custom built.

The general user or project manager will:

- Enter lessons learned based on day-to-day experiences, can be written or webcam/phone video
- Categorize lessons learned
- Add attachments
- Associate lessons with events
- Search for lessons based on categories, keywords, events or date ranges
- Rate lessons learned to let others know how helpful it was
- Assign actions to the lesson for follow up response (either by RPCU, other managers or the author themselves)

A general approach to implementing the MSC and PV-MSC process is presented here.

Project phase	Action	Parties involved
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, develop and/or adapt online database for lessons learned • Trial and refine if necessary 	National Projects, Regional PCU, consultants
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project managers report through online database every quarter • Refine through personal consultation with managers the direction of thematic areas • Identify good practices from the lessons learned, create case studies, feed back into project delivery 	National Projects, Regional PCU
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refine the system and process 	National Projects, Regional PCU

In addition to the processes described for the project impact and management learning streams, up to ten people will be identified who have developed good stories of change to present at the R2R Knowledge Summit. These will be people who have participated in the MSC process at some level and at most 2 project managers. They will be supported to develop their story into a concise, professional 10-15min verbal presentation and coached on public speaking.

7. Sharing Lessons Learned

As described earlier there are many approaches to sharing lessons learned. The GEF Pacific R2R Programme will use a mixture of approaches to ensure good coverage and trial which approaches work best for different stakeholders. Outputs from both the Project Impact and Management Learning streams will be used, where suitable, across all approaches. Some suggestions for sharing lessons learned include:

R2R Knowledge Summit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be held in conjunction with Coastal Summits, RSC Meetings, separate events • Will focus on verbal presentations, PV-MSC Premiere Screening, Art Exhibition, Food Fair, Learning Field Trips and interactive workshops • The event will be recorded and broadcast across R2R media channels, can turn the whole process into a lessons learned as well <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verbal Presentations: Ted style talks from a select group of project managers, agency staff and community members. Speakers and their stories are chosen based on the MSC process and lessons learned. Speakers are carefully coached before the event to refine their story. 2. Interactive Workshops Led by the speakers and other staff, community etc. Brainstorms on how the best practices can be institutionalised. Careful coaching on facilitation of these events and limited number of attendees. 3. PV-MSC Premiere Screening and Art Exhibition The professional developed PV-MSC stories will be presented at a Premiere, followed by Q&A with some of the community members who participated. 4. Food Fair As part of one of the above events, or separately, invite farmers who are growing food through sustainable best practice to share their food with local cooks/chefs. Showcase what the possibilities are for end products. 5. Learning Field Trips Weaving stories and best practices back into the environment (caring for coast, catchment restoration, sustainable land practices etc.)
MSC 'Newspaper'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting the stories in an online newspaper style format. Includes images, links, videos where they are made.
In Focus – thematic online events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project teams (several teams chosen for each event) and RPCU present a notable best practice case study, it is available for comment, feedback, assistance from other projects and an associated advisor. Online conference to showcase
R2R Website and social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection, storage and sharing of lessons learned as they happen as well as published good practice case studies/guidelines • Communities of Practice and online searchable database with video attachments
Published compendium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of the MSC stories • Collection of lessons learned from project managers written up as guidelines, good practice, cautionary tales

